Nose Is a Nose Is a Nose

GOETZ KLUGE

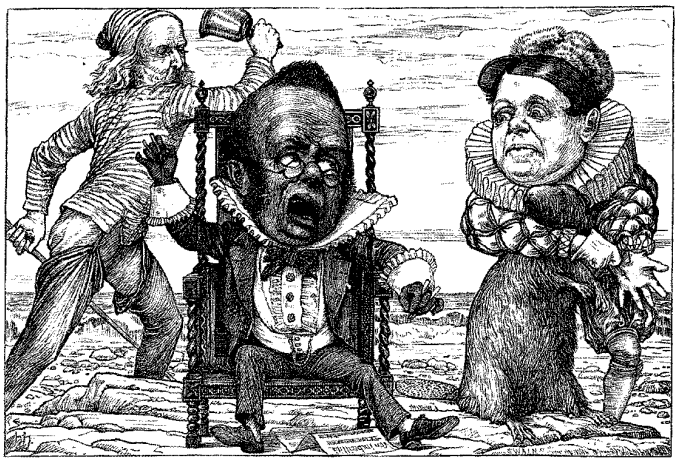

Figure 1 Henry Holiday illustration for Lewis Carroll's The Hunting of the Snark

Henry Holiday's illustration for Lewis Carroll's *The Hunting of the Snark* shown in Figure 1 indicates that the Banker didn't feel too well after his encounter with the Bandersnatch. Holiday faithfully put into artistic form what Carroll wrote:

> He was black in the face, and they scarcely
> could trace
> The least likeness to what he had been:
> While so great was his fright that his waistcoat
> turned white—
> A wonderful thing to be seen!

Carroll's Snark ballad was published in 1876. In 1872, Edward Lear wrote this limerick:

> There was an old man of Port Grigor,
> Whose actions were noted for vigour;
> He stood on his head
> till his waistcoat turned red,
> That eclectic old man of Port Grigor.

Did Carroll allude to Lear's waistcoat poetry in *Snark*? That would be a textual allusion. Could there be pictorial allusions as well?

Figure 2a shows a close-up of the Banker's head. Figure 2b depicts (after slight horizontal compression) *The Imagebrakers* (c. 1567), an etching by Marcus Gheeraerts the Elder. It has some surprising resemblances to Holiday's illustration: note the similar mouths and right eyes. Other details match well, too, but the noses do not—or at least not at first glance. But take the nose (highlighted by the rectangle in Figure 2b) and invert it, and you'll get Figure 2c, which more closely matches the Banker's face. If Holiday did indeed use the etching as his inspiration, he perhaps gave one of the Banker's nostrils an almost rectangular shape because he found that shape in the inverted nose from Gheeraerts' etching as well.

I first made this comparison in 2009. It was among the findings that prompted my "Snark hunt" a couple of years ago. Does it really show that Holiday had been influenced by Gheeraerts's print? Or was my finding an illusion? It's a matter of opinion, and there's no evidence to decide whether Holiday was indeed alluding to Gheeraerts's print. There probably never will be any clear evidence. Thus, this is the place for us to decide. As Heinz von Foerster once said, "Only those questions that are in principle undecidable, we can decide" (von Foerster: "Ethics and Second-Order Cybernetics," *Système et thérapie familiale*, Paris, 1990).

There are indeed other possible inspirational sources for Holiday's image. I first found William Sidney Mount's painting *The Bone Player* (1856) on Mahendra Singh's blog. Figure 3 shows a mirror image of the painting, which bears many resemblances to the Banker image. Note the similar poses and the bones in their hands held in nearly identical positions. Henry Holiday and Lewis Carroll may well have seen this painting in London in 1875 when Goupil & Cie promoted lithographic reproductions by Jean-Baptiste Adolphe Lafosse.

There is a possible third source, involving the Bellman's arm: a Benjamin Duchenne photo taken in or before 1868 and used in Charles Darwin's *The Expression of Emotions in Man and Animals.* It is shown in Figure 4, and it might have inspired Henry Holiday as well. For more information, visit http://kl.snrk.de in my blog.

Figure 2a Detail of the Banker's face

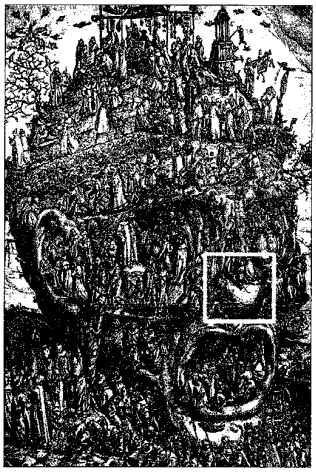

Figure 2b The Imagebreakers, *a 1567 etching by Marcus Gheeraerts (the nose is highlighted in white)*

Figure 2c The Imagebreakers *with the nose inverted*

Figure 3 The Bone Player, *an 1856 painting by William Sidney Mount*

Figure 4 Benjamin Duchenne photograph used in Darwin's The Expression of Emotions in Man and Animals

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